

# Physical Activity and Metastatic Breast Cancer



## Many people with metastatic breast cancer can be active



Many people find physical activity makes them feel good about themselves. You may have felt this way too prior to your diagnosis. It may seem like you cannot be active if you have metastatic breast cancer (MBC). But even a little bit of activity can make you feel good. Many people with MBC find new ways to be active, with help from their doctor.

Tumor growth outside the original cancer site, called metastases, can limit your activity. Medical treatments may affect what you can do, too. But your doctor can help you find ways to be active. This brochure will help you start a conversation with your doctor.

Talk with your doctor about what benefits you want from physical activity and any worries you have. Describe activities you've enjoyed in the past and how they made you feel. Together, you and your doctor can choose some physical activities that you may be able to enjoy safely.

Stay active





## Being active has many benefits

Physical activity can have many benefits for people with MBC.



### Less fatigue

It may surprise you to learn that physical activity can help reduce fatigue. Doctors often advise people who have cancer-related fatigue to increase their physical activity.



### Better mood

Physical activity can often improve your mood. Even a short walk can lift your spirits.



### More strength and freedom of movement

Your doctor may recommend an activity plan to help you stay strong and able to get around. For some people with cancer, physical activity saves bone strength, walking ability, and grip strength. These all may help you stay independent.

## Being active may not be easy

Some people with MBC may find it hard to be active because of physical limitations. Always pay attention to how your body feels when deciding how active to be. Be sure to tell your doctor about any new pains or other problems you have while being active.



### Fatigue

Fatigue is a common symptom of MBC. It can also be a side effect of treatments for MBC. Even though physical activity can reduce fatigue, it may not be possible if fatigue is too severe. Match your activity level to your energy level, and rest when you need to.



### Weak bones and joints

If your metastases are in your bones, your bones may become too brittle or weak to safely do more intense activities like jogging.

For example, if you use a cane, walker, or wheelchair to get around, you may be limited in the activities you can do.



### Pain

Pain is a very common symptom of MBC. Pain may limit how active you can be. If you're having pain, don't push yourself too hard. Tell your doctor if you notice any new pain or if it gets worse.

# Challenges



## Ideas for activity

Your doctor can recommend activities that fit your needs. Here are some ideas to discuss.



### Low-impact activities

If you need to avoid stress to your bones or joints, low-impact activity classes, such as tai chi, may be a good option. These activities do not involve running or jumping. They use the body's own weight to improve balance and strength.

Many of these classes focus on breathing deeply and moving in a flowing, steady way. You may find these classes are relaxing.



### Water-based activities

Swimming or guided water aerobics classes can ease stress on bones and joints. They also strengthen the heart, lungs, and muscles.



### Strength and resistance training

Exercising with resistance can help you stay strong and able to get around. It also helps your body keep making healthy bone tissue. If your cancer has spread to your bones, this is important.



### Seated exercises

If you can't stand or walk for very long, there are activities that you can do while sitting down. There are instructional videos for this type of exercise that your doctor can help you find.



### Every little bit counts

Even very light activity can help. Easy gardening tasks or a short walk can lift your mood and make you feel more energetic and less tired.



### Walking

Taking a gentle stroll around the block is often the easiest type of activity for people with MBC.

*"I want to be that person who I've always been, even though I know that I've changed a lot."*

— Person with MBC

## Tips to stay active

It can be hard at first to get active if it's not already a habit, but there are ways to help make it a part of your routine. Make sure your doctor says it is safe before you begin any activity.



### Meet with a physical or occupational therapist

Physical therapists (PTs) and occupational therapists (OTs) will know the best activities for your unique needs. Check with your insurance company to see if they will pay for your PT or OT visits.



### Find a buddy

Physical activities are often more fun with a friend or partner. Your friend can help you stick to an activity schedule, too.



### Take a class

Group classes are available for all sorts of activities. Classes that happen weekly or daily are easy to make a part of your schedule. Your doctor, friends, support group, or patient navigator may be able to help you find a class that works for you. If you take a class, talk to your doctor about how to keep any equipment clean to avoid infections.





*“I’m working to control MBC and not let it control me. It’s very important to have that control and engage in life—I want to live to the fullest that I can.”*

— Person with MBC

The resources below can help you find more information and referrals for the support needs of people with MBC.

Learn more about MBC and physical activity at:  
**LillyOncology.com**

**Metastatic Breast Cancer Network (mbcn.org)**

- More information about being active with MBC

**Breastcancer.org**

- More information about being active with MBC

**Healthfinder.gov**

- Resources for a healthy lifestyle for everyone, including people with a serious disease or disability